

What abos? [Was Re: (urth) 5HC: Shadow Children in the Lupiverse?]

The Urth list — 13 messages, 6 voices, 26 Apr 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3204>

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Jerry Friedman — 26 Apr 2002, 21:10

How come you guys are all so convinced the abos exist? It seems ambiguous at best. The alternate theory would be that, inspired by his father's con and escaping his squalid life, young Victor Trenchard has developed an elaborate fantasy about the fabulous abos, which he may even think is true. John Marsch shows up with a will to believe and falls for Victor's imaginary friends in a sort of folie a deux.

Pro-abo: Many people in the Sainte-Sainte system believe in them.

Reply: Many people on Earth believe in the yeti, Bigfoot (ObWolfe: Adorable Woods Woman), the Loch Ness monster, alien abductors, and fairies (see below). We seem to like populating the wilderness. Also, some people--Dr. Hagsmith, at least--don't believe in them.

Pro-abo: John V. Marsch looks unusual to Number Five.

Reply: A hint, but I don't find it that convincing. Maybe he's just unusual-looking.

Pro-abo: Mrs. Blount says she's seen them.

Reply: This is the strongest textual evidence I've found, but as a child she could have been mistaken or lied to (to justify her father's shooting thieving human children!), or she could be remembering wrong. Or Marsch could conceivably have made up that part of the conversation. (The transition is a bit abrupt.)

Is there **any** other textual evidence except from Victor? Assuming he's John V. Marsch.

Pro-abo: Wolfe is usually on the side of credu^H^H^H^H^H belief.

Reply: Another strong argument, though extra-textual, and there's a first time for everything.

Anti-abo: There is no skeletal evidence, although Earthly explorers went to considerable effort to bring back specimens of animals (dead or alive) and humans (alive).

Reply: I'll let the people who believe in them reply. I will point out, however, that the (apparently) original Marsch tells us that the "Good People" were proven to exist, so maybe we're supposed to believe that a sentient race could populate a region and leave almost no trace.

Anti-abo: There's no trace of the abos' language.

Reply: Did they learn English telepathically? Did they ever have a language of their own?

Anti-abo: You apparently have to believe either 1) Prehistoric Earth humans had space flight, for which there's a compelling lack of evidence.

2) Parallel evolution reached the point where humans and abos are (nearly?) indistinguishable and, in many of your versions, can interbreed.

3) Humanity originated somewhere other than Earth. These last two have a serious conflict with evolutionary thought, as Dan'I pointed out.

Reply: Maybe implausible, but all traditional sf assumptions.

--- Tony Ellis <LittleSense at necronomicon.co.uk> wrote: ...

Personally, I have never felt that Victor had any sort of hidden agenda for writing 'A Story'. Making him the author always seemed to me to be simply a framing device, of which Wolfe is inordinately fond. Like Latro's scrolls, or Cutthroat's recording gadget, or making Horn the author of the Book of the Long Sun.

...

How about his motive being enjoying and spreading his fantasy?

Looking more or less haggard is not, by my definition, shapeshifting. Trenchard, who has witnessed this ability firsthand, does not even believe it is in any way superhuman: "A matter of the voice, you understand, and the muscles of the face." There's a hint that there may be more to it than that in the way Victor interjects "Everything!" at this point, and I've suggested before now that it could be partially telepathic. But it's not the transformation of a human being into a "household utensil" as Dr Hagsmith puts it.

Again, Victor is eager to provide evidence for the abos' existence.

To sum up: I see more and better evidence against the abos' existence than for it.

Jerry Friedman

Tony Ellis — 27 Apr 2002, 09:44 · follows Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman wrote:

To sum up: I see more and better evidence against the abos' existence than for it.

Pro abo:

Having primed us with the knowledge that abos can't use tools, Wolfe tells us over and over again that Victor is completely ham-fisted. More than that, he makes Marsch, the arrogant academic who is looking for abos, tell us this over and over, without once making the connection. This is typical both of the way Wolfe encodes true information, and of his penchant for poking fun at academics.

The account of Rober Culot. And don't forget that the interviews we see are only the tip of the iceberg of accounts Marsch has gathered.

Marsch himself writes "There was a native race. The stories are too widespread, to circumstantial, too well documented." He may be arrogant, but he's not stupid, and he's put in the legwork.

And finally. If there really aren't any abos, doesn't that make for kind of a dull story? :-)

Jerry Friedman — 27 Apr 2002, 19:27 · follows Tony Ellis

--- Tony Ellis <LittleSense at necronomicon.co.uk> wrote:

Jerry Friedman wrote:

To sum up: I see more and better evidence against the abos' existence than for it.

Pro abo:

Having primed us with the knowledge that abos can't use tools, Wolfe tells us over and over again that Victor is completely ham-fisted. More than that, he makes Marsch, the arrogant academic who is looking for abos, tell us this over and over, without once making the connection. This is typical both of the way Wolfe encodes true information, and of his penchant for poking fun at academics.

Victor again. If he fantasizes that he's an abo, you would expect him to pretend to be ham-fisted, or he may be taking "advantage" of and even "developing" his natural clumsiness. I can just see him at five refusing to hold the pencil the way the other kids did.

The account of Rober Culot

He remembers that his grandfather claimed to see abos in order to annoy Robert's father (if I remember right)--not very convincing. By the way, the surname "Culot" doesn't inspire confidence.

And don't forget that the interviews we see are only the tip of the iceberg of accounts Marsch has gathered.

We have no idea what the rest are like.

Marsch himself writes "There was a native race. The stories are too widespread, to circumstantial, too well documented." He may be arrogant, but he's not stupid, and he's put in the legwork.

Above you made him look pretty stupid. Anyway, Marsch wants to find abos, so it's no surprise that he believes he does. He may be right, or he may be thinking wishfully.

And finally. If there really aren't any abos, doesn't that make for kind of a dull story? :-)

Maybe, maybe not. I like Pale Fire a lot, though my reading of it is that Kinbote and Shade don't exist. (My suggestions here may have been influenced a lot by Pale Fire.)

Jerry Friedman

Tony Ellis — 28 Apr 2002, 11:27 · follows Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman wrote (of the account of Robert Culot):

He remembers that his grandfather claimed to see abos in order to annoy Robert's father (if I remember right)--not very convincing.

Actually, you remember wrong. He remembers his grandfather as "'a most honest old man. He would not tell lies to anyone, you understand.'" But perhaps he is delusional, like Victor. Or stupid, like Doctor Marsch. Or lied to, like Madame Blount. :-)

And that (alongside the what-a-boring-story factor) is the problem I have with the no-abos theory, which I have certainly considered many times during my re-readings of 5HC down the years. There is all sorts of evidence in the novellas indicating that the abos exist, and to say that they don't forces you to invent an excuse for every last piece of it. If it feels right for you, fair enough, but to me it just feels like struggling against the natural current of the story, as opposed to letting it take me where it wants to go.

Jerry Friedman — 29 Apr 2002, 20:42 · follows Tony Ellis

--- Tony Ellis <LittleSense at necronomicon.co.uk> wrote:

Jerry Friedman wrote (of the account of Robert Culot):

He remembers that his grandfather claimed to see abos in order to annoy Robert's father (if I remember right)--not very convincing.

Actually, you remember wrong. He remembers his grandfather as "'a most honest old man. He would not tell lies to anyone, you understand.'" But perhaps he is delusional, like Victor. Or stupid, like Doctor Marsch. Or lied to, like Madame Blount. :-)

Or senile. Or the younger Culot could be lying. Or just mistaken.

By the way, you were the one who said the real Dr. Marsch was stupid for not recognizing Victor's clumsiness as a sign that he was an abo. But Victor wasn't clumsy. According to Marsch, he was an excellent camp cook (which must involve using knives, spatulas, etc.), brilliant with ropes, and capable of pounding tent pegs with a rock. He just couldn't write in the normal way or shoot. Victor's skills with tools could be a sign that he's not an abo--or that he's half abo.

And that (alongside the what-a-boring-story factor) is the problem I have with the no-abos theory, which I have certainly considered many times during my re-readings of 5HC down the years. There is all sorts of evidence in the novellas indicating that the abos exist, and to say that they don't forces you to invent an excuse for every last piece of it. If it feels right for you, fair enough, but to me it just feels like struggling against the natural current of the story, as opposed to letting it take me where it wants to go.

Precisely my problem with the abos theory. You have to invent some really enormous excuses. This is, after all, a future in which anthropologists are desperate for new material. There should be roomsful of videotapes of the abos' quaint ceremonies. There should be treaties. There should be chiefs or supposed chiefs being briefly lionized in the capitals of Earth. There should have been a large reward for abo remains, so Mrs. Blount's father wouldn't have dreamed of just leaving them for the wild animals. These lacks seem much harder to gloss over than the testimony of a few individuals.

Jerry Friedman

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 29 Apr 2002, 21:21 · follows Jerry Friedman

Jerry observed that:

Victor wasn't clumsy. According to Marsch, he was an excellent camp cook (which must involve using knives, spatulas, etc.), brilliant with ropes, and capable of pounding tent pegs with a rock. He just couldn't write in the normal way or shoot.

Or start a fire.

Actually, here's a weird interpretation of 5HC: Suppose we presume that everyone, in all three novellas, is actually telling the truth

-- as he sees it, for his or her own reasons? Sort of a reversal of the "unreliable narrator" tactic. Does this create an unworkable set of contradictions, or can these all be reasonably attributed to the differences between their various perspectives?

There's a quote on my old ACE edition from (I think) Ursula K. Le Guin (btw, has anyone else read the new Earthsea novel? I'm about halfway through it and I think it's the best thing she's written in many years) to the effect that 5HC is a fictional dramatization of the uncertainty principle.

Okay, so what does that mean? Does she mean it the way a physicist would mean it, i.e., that there is an absolute limit to how much you can know about something and if you make one aspect of it more certain you make another aspect less certain? Or is she referring to the all too common social scientist's misreading of the principle, the idea that "[the presence of] the observer affects the outcome/results of the experiment?"

I suspect that she actually means the former. Though Le Guin is not a hard science fiction writer, she has repeatedly (and especially in THE DISPOSSESSED) shown that she takes the trouble to understand the hard sciences, even if she chooses to override them (i.e., the way just about everyone overrides the hard sciences by allowing FTL communication and/or travel); I'm reasonably sure she wouldn't make the error of the latter.

But then what does she mean? My initial thought is that she's saying that the more closely you look at any given aspect of 5HC, the more some other aspect(s) will go out of focus. So you can develop a theory of the whole book that doesn't get too detailed, or you can develop a theory that explains any given aspect of it in a completely satisfying way but doesn't fit with some other aspect(s): in short, no complete theory for understanding 5HC may be possible.

Does this ring true?

I fear it may.

Tony Ellis — 30 Apr 2002, 11:47 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Jerry Friedman wrote (of the non-existence of the abos):

Actually, you remember wrong. He remembers his grandfather as "'a most honest old man. He would not tell lies to anyone, you understand.'" But perhaps he is delusional, like Victor. Or stupid, like Doctor Marsch. Or

lied to, like Madame Blount. :-)

Or senile. Or the younger Culot could be lying. Or just mistaken.

None of which is supported by the text. And none of which disproves the existence of the abos, until you also invent similar extra-textual reasons why every other piece of evidence is wrong. Robert Culot was senile _and_ Victor is delusional _and_ Doctor Marsch is stupid _and_ Madame Blount was lied to, and so on and on.

By the way, you were the one who said the real Dr. Marsch was stupid for not recognizing Victor's clumsiness as a sign that he was an abo.

By the way, I didn't. I said he was arrogant, and that his failing to make the connection was "typical both of the way Wolfe encodes true information, and of his penchant for poking fun at academics." You can be unimaginative without being stupid.

But Victor wasn't clumsy.

In your post of April 27 you state "If he fantasizes that he's an abo, you would expect him to pretend to be ham-fisted".

According to Marsch, he was an excellent camp cook (which must involve using knives, spatulas, etc.),

Marsch doesn't tell us what it involves (and I've known more than one excellent cook who regularly sliced his own fingers with the onions). Wolfe does, however, make him tell us that "Even so, he burns his fingers pretty often, I notice."

brilliant with ropes,

Which we would expect from a people whose reliance on knotting "nets of rawhide or vegetable fibre" as Number Five puts it, is foreshadowed waaay back in the early pages of the first novella. And raised several times subsequently.

and capable of pounding tent pegs with a rock.

A feat rather less impressive than his ability to use a pen. The significance of the peg-pounding incident is that it reveals, as Marsch discovers, that "we had not brought an ax, or any other sort of implement with which to drive the tent pegs." Odd, that.

He just couldn't write in the normal way or shoot.

Or cook without regularly burning his fingers.

Or use matches.

Or make flint weapons as well as his crippled father.

Or "even remember the way to twist open the top of a jar."

On the existence of the abos:

You have to invent some really enormous excuses.

No, you just have to read the text:

There should be roomsful of videotapes of the abos' quaint ceremonies. There should be treaties.

We are told, more than once, of "the destruction of the records of the first French landing parties by the war."

There should be chiefs or supposed chiefs being briefly lionized in the capitals of Earth. There should have been a large reward for abo remains, so Mrs. Blount's father wouldn't have dreamed of just leaving them for the wild animals.

You seem to be crediting these colonists from a future, overcrowded, and very distant Earth with a degree of philanthropy and compassion entirely absent from the picture Wolfe paints -- which is based very obviously on the treatment of the Australian and Tasmanian aborigines by early Western settlers.

R.T.: ".but would they be wise to show themselves? Once all this world of Sainte Anne was theirs. A farmer thinks: "Suppose they are men like me after all? That Dupont, he is a clever lawyer. What if they engage him, eh?" .What do you think the farmer does then if he sees an abo on his land, Doctor? Will he tell anyone? Or will he shoot?"

Jerry Friedman — 01 May 2002, 22:20 · follows Tony Ellis

--- Tony Ellis <LittleSense at necronomicon.co.uk> wrote:
Jerry Friedman wrote (of the non-existence of the abos):

Actually, you remember wrong. He remembers his grandfather as "'a most honest old man. He would not tell lies to anyone, you understand.'"

But
perhaps he is delusional, like Victor. Or stupid, like Doctor Marsch.
Or
lied to, like Madame Blount. :-)

Or senile. Or the younger Culot could be lying. Or just mistaken.

None of which is supported by the text. And none of which disproves the existence of the abos,

Well, of course not. I also can't disprove the existence of the achool, a Javanese bat with a nearly twelve-foot wingspan that you can read about on a few Web sites. In fact, it could exist. But in the absence of stuffed achools in natural-history museums, or at least a few photos, I'm not going to believe in them on the strength of an explorer's saying he saw one and reports that the local people believe in them.

until you also invent similar extra-textual reasons
why every other piece of evidence is wrong. Robert Culot was senile
and
Victor is delusional _and_ Doctor Marsch is stupid _and_ Madame Blount
was lied to, and so on and on.

I don't see any "and so on", except the widespread belief in the abos, which I've already mentioned. (Though if you're convinced that the cat is the same being as Victor's girlfriend, that pretty much settles it, I guess.)

There's an extra-textual *fact* that the kind of testimony Marsch gets from Mrs. Blount and especially Robert Culot is unreliable. A visit to <<http://www.cryptozoology.com/>> will show you lots of examples. The evidence for Sasquatch or UFO abductions is surely better than the evidence in 5HC for the abos. Culot's contribution is hearsay, not admissible in court, of no value for science. It probably does have some evidential value in fiction, but we have to weigh it against other evidence. See below.

By the way, you were the one who said the real Dr. Marsch was stupid for not recognizing Victor's clumsiness as a sign that he was an abo.

By the way, I didn't. I said he was arrogant, and that his failing to make
the connection was "typical both of
the way Wolfe encodes true information, and of his penchant for poking
fun
at academics." You can be unimaginative without being stupid.

Sorry. I didn't say he was stupid either; I said he found what he expected to find, an error that highly intelligent people have made.

[Big snip--I'll try to address Victor's clumsiness in another post.]

On the existence of the abos:

You have to invent some really enormous excuses.

No, you just have to read the text:

There should be roomfuls of videotapes of the abos' quaint ceremonies. There should be treaties.

We are told, more than once, of "the destruction of the records of the first French landing parties by the war."

I meant the evidence on Earth. Unless the starcrossers made one-way trips, they would have brought back videotapes or films, remains, and whatever else they could get their hands on. What else did they have to bring back?

Also, if you accept Mrs. Blount's statement, there was contact with the abos after the war and no reason for any records of that to be lost.

There should be chiefs or supposed chiefs being briefly lionized in the capitals of Earth. There should have been a large reward for abo remains, so Mrs. Blount's father wouldn't have dreamed of just leaving them for the wild animals.

You seem to be crediting these colonists from a future, overcrowded, and very distant Earth with a degree of philanthropy and compassion entirely absent from the picture Wolfe paints -- which is based very obviously on the treatment of the Australian and Tasmanian aborigines by early Western settlers.

No, I'm crediting them with the same degree of curiosity, interest in science, and greed that Europeans had at the time of the colonization of the Americas and Australia. (I certainly didn't mean to imply that the treaties would be kept!)

Columbus brought back six Indians on his first voyage, of whom four died before reaching Spain <http://www.castellobanfi.com/features/story_3.html>. There was at least American Indian (ObWolfe: Squanto) in Britain before the Mayflower sailed. I had remarkable difficulty finding similar information about Australia. The best I've got is from a strikingly racist lecture by Thomas Huxley in 1862, that is, 84 years after the first European settlement. By that time Huxley could say, "...in the College of Surgeons there are a number of skulls of Southern Australians..." <<http://www.maps.jcu.edu.au/hist/stats/hux/huxley6.htm>>. (Earlier pages at that site contain interesting information on his difficulties in getting photographs of aborigines.)

We know that anthropology is going strong enough on Earth to pay for Dr. Marsch's expedition, and we know there are the resources and interest to come up with A Field Guide to the Animals of Sainte Anne. I'd expect that if the Annese could be captured or killed, living individuals or remains would have been brought to Earth. The case is even stronger for videotapes, rawhide or vegetable-fiber nets, and whatever else might have been available. The absence of these would be unprecedented and strikes me as strong evidence against the abos' existence. The possibility of mistakes or dishonesty on the part of a few individuals has more than ample precedent, and so their statements strike me as weaker evidence. Remember

the Loch Ness monster!

Wolfe could easily provide us with certain evidence of the abos if he wanted to. Just as an example, when Marsch meets Trenchard, he could note, "This old faker's face had none of the characteristics of the Annese skulls in Paris, and his voice didn't resemble the recordings." I feel sure that Wolfe wanted the matter to be open to doubt.

R.T.: ".but would they be wise to show themselves? Once all this world of Sainte Anne was theirs. A farmer thinks: "Suppose they are men like me after all? That Dupont, he is a clever lawyer. What if they engage him, eh?" .What do you think the farmer does then if he sees an abo on his land, Doctor? Will he tell anyone? Or will he shoot?"

R.T. is a con man trying to keep a potential source of money from getting skeptical. Furthermore, Mrs. Blount's story (if you believe her) states that in her case the abos did show themselves, though as Trenchard suggests they were unwise to do so. In the same way Dr. Hagsmith's story of the massacre (if you believe it) has the abos unable to avoid Earth people. Is it possible to come up with any account of the abos (or more than one) in which you decide what to accept and what to reject, and end up with something that doesn't contradict itself?

Jerry Friedman

Robert Borski — 02 May 2002, 04:26 · follows Jerry Friedman

Jerry F. having opined:

"Wolfe could easily provide us with certain evidence of the abos if he wanted to. Just as an example, when Marsch meets Trenchard, he could note, 'This old faker's face had none of the characteristics of the Annese skulls in Paris, and his voice didn't resemble the recordings.' I feel sure that Wolfe wanted the matter to be open to doubt."

Do interviews count?

In Lawrence Person's interview of Gene Wolfe for Nova Express (Fall/Winter 1998), the following exchange takes place between Person and Wolfe:

LP: Speaking of the New Wave, *The Fifth Head of Cerberus*, especially in book form, does utilize a lot of New Wave techniques, including non-linear narrative forms and unreliable narrators. Why did you feel you needed to tell these interlocked stories in that particular way?

GW: (Snip, snip, snip. Then:) Once I had done the original story, I wanted to do other related stories so that I could make a book, and the obvious thing seemed to be to do a prequel and a sequel, which is basically what I did. So they're nonlinear, if you want to put it like that. Of course, I did do the rather tricky thing, which I suppose is New Wave, of having one of the characters in one of the other stories as the purported author of, a, aggh...I'm sorry, I've lost the titles of my own stories.

LP: "'A Story,' by John V. Marsch."

GW: "'A Story,' by John V. Marsch," yes, which is not actually written by John V. Marsch, but by the shadowchild who has *replaced* John V. Marsch. (Italics Wolfe's)

(Apologies to Editor Person for the copyright violation, but the interview is otherwise

unavailable, the issue having sold out.)

Robert Borski

Jason Ingram — 02 May 2002, 05:21 · follows Robert Borski

This sounds like a valuable interview. It pushes back the 'unreliable narrator' question one level: are we to take the term "shadowchild" literally, or to view it as a slip where "abo" was intended?

(pedantic aside: style guides vary, and at least one leaves capitalization in the case of independent clauses following colons optional.)

Sepia

On Wednesday, May 1, 2002, at 09:26 PM, Robert Borski wrote:
GW: "'A Story,' by John V. Marsch," yes, which is not actually written
by
John V. Marsch, but by the shadowchild who has _replaced_ John V.
Marsch.
(Italics Wolfe's)

(Apologies to Editor Person for the copyright violation, but the
interview
is otherwise unavailable, the issue having sold out.)

Tony Ellis — 02 May 2002, 11:54 · follows Jason Ingram

Jerry Friedman wrote:
Unless the starcrossers made one-way
trips, they would have brought back videotapes or films, remains, and
whatever else they could get their hands on.

We're not told what sort of communication went on between the first settlers and Earth. But if we're going to indulge in speculation, we can just as easily speculate that there was none at all, that the French settlers came to the system with the precise intention of breaking all ties with Earth. After all, the texts do tell us that:

1. It takes over 20 years, Earth time, for a starcrosser to get to St Anne. Another 20-plus to get back.
2. Relations between Earth and the French settlers were sufficiently bad for a full-scale war to erupt.

Neither of which exactly suggests a lively and co-operative exchange. We are also told that the Annese were a "thinly-scattered" people, who "died off before they could be thoroughly studied," which doesn't argue for there being many photo-opportunities in any case.

We know that anthropology is going strong enough on Earth to pay
for Dr. Marsch's expedition

The successful funding of which rather suggests that sufficient evidence
did get back in the end, does it not?

Also, if you accept Mrs. Blount's statement, there was contact with
the abos after the war and no reason for any records of that to be
lost.

If you accept Madame Blount's statement, after the war the abos were (a) thought of as "animals shaped like people", (b) shot with impunity, and (c) disposed of after shooting. That's about as far away from making records as you can get.

Adam Stephanides — 02 May 2002, 15:45 · follows Tony Ellis

on 5/1/02 11:26 PM, Robert Borski at rborski at charter.net wrote:
GW: "'A Story,' by John V. Marsch," yes, which is not actually written by
John V. Marsch, but by the shadowchild who has _replaced_ John V. Marsch.
(Italics Wolfe's)

This is an interesting bit of info, but it can't be literally true that Victor is one of the Shadow Children: he refers to his mother as one of the Free People (p. 240, Ace pb), whom he regards as distinct from the Shadow Children, and he obviously looks nothing like the Shadow Children of "A Story."

In any case, this interview was conducted twenty-six years after the story was written, so I wouldn't take it as conclusive, no matter how it's interpreted.

--Adam

Jerry Friedman — 02 May 2002, 21:42 · follows Adam Stephanides

--- Tony Ellis <LittleSense at necronomicon.co.uk> wrote: ...

Also, if you accept Mrs. Blount's statement, there was contact with
the abos after the war and no reason for any records of that to be
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If you accept Madame Blount's statement, after the war the abos were (a)
thought of as "animals shaped like people", (b) shot with impunity, and
(c)
disposed of after shooting. That's about as far away from making records
as you can get.

Well, thanks to Robert Borski, it's settled now, and you were right. (Despite the discrepancies Adam Stephanides pointed out, I'd take Wolfe's remark as showing that there were intelligent beings on Sainte Anne when the French landed.)

The above is an interesting issue, though. Your (a) and (b) are totally consistent with records--that's how there are stuffed specimens of animals in museums, of which Sainte Croix has one. The question is why there aren't abo specimens in the museum. Maybe it's because of the point made by Roy Trenchard in the interview you quoted, which as people have noted echoes something David says: the people of Sainte-Sainte don't **really** think of the abos as animals, or at least they're aware that some authority might force them to stop doing so, so they don't want any evidence of killing abos.

Jerry Friedman